



## Rural Partners ...

Quarterly Newsletter of the Indiana Rural Development Council  
Summer 2004

### Message from the Executive Director

Our lead article, "Changing Faces/Changing Places" focuses on some of the exciting changes taking place within and around IRDC. And while these changes will greatly benefit Indiana rural communities, I believe it is also important to stop and reflect on what is not changing within your state rural development council. IRDC understands the important role that values play in the day-to-day lives of our rural residents, and it is vital that our organization emulate that value-based approach to our work! As we move forward, IRDC's actions will be based upon three beliefs:

*1. Rural communities will need to be both resilient and sustainable to be successful in the 21st century.* Rural communities are in a constant state of change. Communities will need to be able to respond quickly and appropriately to change, threats and opportunities. In addition, communities will need to meet current demands without compromising the ability of future generations

### IRDC – Changing Faces / Changing Places

Welcome partners! It's been a while since our last newsletter. Although the newsletter has been on hiatus for the past year and a half, IRDC has not. During this time, we have undergone many positive and exciting changes and developments.



Sarah Yeager & Don Koverman

In May 2003, Don Koverman was hired as the IRDC executive director, succeeding Wendy Dant Chesser who now is the deputy director for the Indiana Department of Commerce (IDOC). Don brings with him a wide variety of experience; he has held positions in all three levels of government, served on the faculty of a land grant university, served as director of a 20-county nonprofit regional foundation. Don helped form and served on the state rural development council in Minnesota. In March 2004, the IRDC staff doubled in size with the addition of Sarah Yeager as the IRDC program manager.

Besides the change in personnel, the IRDC has changed locations. One year ago, the IRDC moved to a new home in the Indiana Department of Commerce's Community Development Division as part of the agency's reorganization process. The new office location is on the sixth floor of One N. Capitol Ave., just a block south of our former home in the Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture. Tim Monger, executive director of Commerce, is excited about his agency hosting the Council. He noted, "This partnership is a win-win: IRDC can benefit from Commerce's programs and 12 regional offices, while Commerce can benefit from IRDC's link to rural communities and other national, state and regional organizations."

to meet their own needs.

*2. Rural development should be "inclusive," not "exclusive."* We can promote an "inclusive environment" by making sure that the way we deliver programs and services will enable us to better respond to our residents. Why? Because "when you've seen one rural community ... you've seen one rural community".

*3. IRDC's resource investment decisions must be based on sound research and development principles.* The Rural Economic Development Strategy (REDS) was a dynamic initiative that brought together hundreds of citizens, elected officials and public-private sector partners to examine the various issues impacting rural Indiana. IRDC understands and respects the hard work contributed by so many statewide and recognizes the important research/recommendations that resulted from that initiative. Therefore, we believe it is vital that this stakeholder input be utilized in the future as programs are designed and decision-criteria and administrative guidelines are created. In this way our resource investment decisions **will** be based on sound research and development principles.

So while your state rural development council is changing and evolving, you can also depend on us to fulfill our purpose of



"The IRDC believes that successful rural communities will need to have the ability to respond to problems and take advantage of opportunities. Our partnership with the Indiana Department of Commerce will help us build effective bridges between rural communities, their needs, and the resources within the Department of Commerce," adds Mayor Bill Graham, IRDC Governing Board Chairman.

December 2003 marked another important milestone for the Council as we celebrated 10 years of service to rural communities during our annual meeting at the Lebanon Conference Center. Despite the cold and snowy weather, IRDC had a record number of conference participants, presenters, sponsors and exhibitors.

An additional positive change for the IRDC are the Rural Regional Partnership and Rural Development Action Program funding program created by the Energize Indiana legislation; we also have the new and challenging role of distributing funds (see NEW \$\$\$ FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES). The Council meets this opportunity with excitement, as it is yet another way we can help rural communities.

IRDC is ever-changing and evolving, all to better serve rural communities. To learn more about our accomplishments over the years and the 2004 Work Plan, please see our Web site at [www.state.in.us/irdc](http://www.state.in.us/irdc).

### **Environmental Infrastructure Working Group (EIWG)**

EIWG is a collaboration of state and federal agencies. By coordinating various agencies and using a single application, communities can discuss all funding options for their water and wastewater projects at one meeting. This optimizes the efforts of communities and agencies. The following communities participated in the May 5 EIWG meeting: the town of Redkey, town of Sunman, town of Liberty Center and the town of Georgetown.

### **Indiana Housing Assistance Review Team (IHART)**

Initiated by Housing Task Force. IHART brings the state and federal

fulfill our purpose of coordinating the efforts of citizens and governments to meet the economic and social needs of rural Indiana!

### **Mission Statement**

The Indiana Rural Development Council (IRDC) is a partnership of local, state, federal, profit and not-for-profit stakeholders serving Indiana communities. The IRDC's purpose is to coordinate efforts of citizens and governments to meet the economic and social needs of rural Indiana.

funding agencies together to help communities identify programs that provide assistance with rural housing needs.

To apply to participate in the monthly EIWG or IHART meetings, visit the IRDC Web site at [www.state.in.us/irdc](http://www.state.in.us/irdc).

## **Leadership Spotlight – Leadership Conference December 9 & 10**

On Dec. 9 and 10 in Lebanon, Ind., the IRDC will join with the Indiana Leadership Association (ILA) for the fall annual meeting. During this meeting, we will focus our attention on one of the important segments of the Rural Economic Development Strategy - building the leadership capacities of our rural communities. Two exciting days of study are planned to heighten awareness and understand the purpose of leadership in the context of quality of life and economic capacity of Indiana's rural communities.

In the full spirit of partnerships and collaborations, this conference will bring rural development and leadership development practitioners together to discuss strategies and tools for strengthening our communities through strong leadership. Through the conference discussions, we intend to develop common language about leadership that is needed for our 21st -century rural communities.

During the conference, we will explore the transition that is taking place in the leadership paradigm and how this impacts the practice of leadership in our rural communities. The conference will showcase communities demonstrating successful leadership "how to," provide opportunities for attendees to deliberate and reflect, and offer challenges for taking action.

The Indiana Leadership Association (ILA) is a membership organization of community leadership programs and practitioners. This statewide organization and its members are committed to building strong leadership in their communities and across Indiana. It is a network that offers tremendous resources.

Partners helping the IRDC and the ILA to make this conference a reality include the Indiana Small Business Development Centers, the Indiana Association of Counties, Purdue University Extension Service and the Southern Indiana Rural Development Project.

Please make plans now to attend the fall conference. You won't want to miss out on this great meeting. Stay tuned for more details about conference speakers and session facilitators.

## **New \$\$\$ For Rural Communities**

Through the collaborative efforts of the governor's office and the Indiana General Assembly, rural communities are now able to access new funding for rural development projects. Under the "Energize Indiana" legislation, the Indiana Rural Development Council received a \$7.2 million appropriation (for 2003/2004) to support rural development in two specific areas:

- (1.) **Rural Regional Partnership Program** – created to provide capacity building for regional organizations and
- (2.) **Rural Development Action Program** – created to support a variety of rural development projects including pilot projects to enhance the economic and community development in rural areas; the establishment of local revolving loan funds for an industrial, commercial, agricultural or tourist ventures; technical assistance; loans for economic development projects; assistance in the development and creation of rural cooperatives; support of rural workforce development challenges; and providing assistance in addressing the telecommunication needs in a rural area.

Utilizing the report entitled: "Rural Economic Development Strategy" (first prepared by the IRDC for the Indiana General Assembly in October of 2002), applicants are asked to show how their project will address local needs as identified by the rural practitioners who participated in that statewide "REDS" fact-finding discussion. In addition, the application guidelines for both grant programs are focused on the project's economic impact to rural Indiana, the role of partnerships and leveraging of local dollars in the project, the project's sustainability, and the ability of the project to be replicated throughout the state.

The grant programs were announced on June 30 and applications will be due on Tuesday, Aug. 31. Grant guidelines and applications can be found on our Web site at:

[www.state.in.us/irdc/application/index.html](http://www.state.in.us/irdc/application/index.html).

## **"Food Venture": Adding Value to Agriculture**

Things are really cooking in Madison, Ind. On April 1, the Food Venture initiation was celebrated. Food Venture will be Indiana's first licensed shared-use, commercial, value-added kitchen incubator and processing facility. During the event, the IRDC Chairman, Mayor Bill Graham, announced that the IRDC would be supporting the project with a \$15,600 financial pledge.

"Food Venture is a piece of a bigger puzzle," says Linda Wood, regional director of the Southeastern Indiana Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Wood discussed the advantages of Food Venture being located in the Venture Out Business Center owned by the Madison Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Tenants of Food Venture will not only have access to the shared-use kitchen, but they will also benefit from having the SBDC and the Service Corps of Retired Executives (S.C.O.R.E.) to assist in business planning and development. IVY Tech plans to offer hospitality management courses. A food science professional from

Purdue and members of the Indiana State Department of Health will assist in ensuring a sanitary facility and proper food preparation by offering workshops to tenants. Wood feels these partnerships create a “win-win situation” for all parties involved.



Food Venture benefits producers by serving as a value-added agriculture development opportunity. Farmers will be able to sell their Grade A produce at farmers' markets or to grocers, while produce with slight imperfections can be made into salsa, jam, etc. in the Food Venture kitchen. This will lower the producers' waste and create more profit.

Madison's central location in a triangle of three major cities (Indianapolis, Ind.; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Louisville, Ky.) will serve the tri-state area with a regional population of approximately two million.

Wood hopes construction will begin by late summer or early fall. For more information about Food Venture, see the Madison Area Chamber of Commerce Web site at [www.madisonchamber.org](http://www.madisonchamber.org).



Indiana Rural Development Council  
One North Capitol, Suite 600 – Indianapolis, Indiana 46204  
Don Koverman, Executive Director – Sarah Yeager, Program Manager  
Tel. 317.232.8776 – Fax 317.233.3597  
[www.IN.gov/irdc](http://www.IN.gov/irdc)

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\*Executive Committee      (A) Alternate Member



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